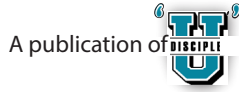


2025-12-7



A publication of adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Triangle Community Church aims to be a “transforming church”. We exist to be used by God as He transforms ordinary people into extraordinary followers of Jesus Christ. TCC believes not only that life-change is possible—but that it is to be expected. Growth is God’s will for his people. But transformation does not happen by accident. It requires intentional, intelligent action. 1 Timothy 4:7 instructs you to “discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.” Since “Talking Points, Walking Points” is intended both for individual reflection and for group discussion, questions vary in degree of vulnerability required. Generally it is best to begin group discussions with questions which involve less personal disclosure—but don’t linger there. Be sure to “dive deep” too! The questions which require the greatest openness and honesty, as well as those in the section entitled “Digging Deeper in your Daily Quiet Time”, are perfect for private reflection.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

Observation—*What does it say?*

- 1 Pastor Doug showed the many ways that Joseph was a very ordinary man—but we can hardly say that his **experiences** were ordinary! In Matthew 1:20-24 & 2:13-14, 19-21, **who** spoke to Joseph?
- 2 According to the following passages, from what **sources** might a message come? From...
- 1 Acts 2:37 people 2 Revelation 17:7 _____ 3 Luke 4:3 _____ 4 Hebrews 1:1 _____

Interpretation—What does it mean?

- 3 We've seen that messages may come from: 1 people, 2 angels, 3 the devil, or from 4 God. From the following passages, rate their relative reliability: Titus 1:2; Numbers 23:19; John 8:44; Hebrews 2:1-2
- 0% 100%
- 4 In light of the variable reliability of sources, what does 1 John 4:1 urge us to do? According to Acts 17:11, against what standard do we test any message?

Application—What do I do with this?

- 5 Has an angel ever spoken to you? Has God (see 1 Thessalonians 2:13 before you answer!)?
- 6 Matthew 22:32 is a quote of God speaking **to Moses** (1,500 years before Jesus was born). But in v. 31, **to whom** does Jesus say these words **also** were spoken? Are they for us also?
- 7 Joseph received all of his angelic message while sleeping (see Matthew 1:20; 2:13 & 19). Which is more open to misinterpretation: a dream or a printed message? Which is more verifiable?
- 8 Joseph **immediately** obeyed the angelic messages—**how obedient** are you to God's message?

- ① An angel spoke to Joseph in a dream. The angel is not named (and so we don't even know if it was the same angel who delivered the various messages). Only two angels are named in the New Testament: **Gabriel** spoke to Mary (Luke 1:26-38) and to Zechariah (Luke 1:11-20). **Michael** is mentioned in Jude 9 and Revelation 12:7. **Unidentified** angels spoke to Joseph, to the shepherds, to the women at Jesus' tomb, and at various accounts in the Books of Acts and Revelation.

- ② ① people speak; ② angels speak; ③ the devil (and demons) speak; ④ God speaks

③ ●	0%		● 100%
Satan is the father of lies. John 8:44	All men (regenerate and unregenerate) are capable of lying. Psalm 116:11; Ephesians 4:1, 17 & 25		God cannot lie. Titus 1:2
Demons are deceiving spirits. 1 Timothy 4:1	Unregenerate men are sons of the Devil, who is a liar. John 8:43–45; 1 John 1:5–10; 2:4 & 22		Elect angels cannot lie. 1 Timothy 5:21
	Regenerate men are to take off lying and put on truth-telling. Ephesians 4:25		

- ④ We are to test every message.
We test messages against the reliable Word of God, the Bible.

- ⑤ **Prepare yourself for this one!** Some people will be confident that they've had an angelic visitation. It **may** have been a good angel (see Hebrews 13:2), it **may** have been a demon (2 Corinthians 11:13–15).
- Don't show shock, disbelief, amusement, etc. to show on your face.
 - Don't let them go on forever with their account.
 - Do ask, "How would one know whether the angel were good or demonic?"
 - Do have Hebrews 13:2 and 2 Corinthians 11:13-15 marked in your Bible.

God, on the other hand, has spoken to **every** man—both through nature (Psalm 19:1-6 & Romans 1:18-32) and his conscience (Romans 2:14-16) and through the Scriptures (Hebrews 4:12-13).

Don't let folks diminish the Scriptures—"OK, sure, God spoke in the Bible. But...."

The Scriptures are the **only** reliable and sufficient source of truth (2 Timothy 3:16–17; 2 Peter 1:3)

- ⑥ Jesus said that this message, which originally was spoken to Moses, was equally "spoken to" men who lived 1,500 years later. ie. The Word of God is applicable (either directly or indirectly) to all men at all times and in all cultures. So yes, that includes us as well.
- ⑦ Dreams—no matter how vivid—are much more open to misinterpretation. (Somehow God made it clear to Joseph that this was a reliable angelic message, but the principle still stands.) The written Word of God, on the other hand, is unchanging/unfading and accessible to grammatical examination.
- ⑧ Don't skimp here! This is where the entire discussion has been heading. Irrespective of whether "Bob" **thinks** he's seen an angel, we **know** that the Bible is the authoritative Word of God and is to be obeyed. Help each other get serious and practical in obeying **something** from God's Word.

Sermon Summary Key Texts: Matthew 1-2 & Luke 1-2

When telling the Christmas story, Mary tends to receive the bulk of the attention—and rightly so. You cannot ignore God's decision to bring the Messiah into the world through a poor, teenaged virgin girl. That is newsworthy. But Joseph's role in the Christmas story is often overlooked. I want us to try to understand the emotions he must have struggled with along the way and the faith he demonstrated as God worked in and through him in the unfolding Christmas drama. Joseph's claim to fame was the fact that he was a descendent of the great King David—Israel's greatest king. But by Joseph's time, the glory days of Israel under King David's reign had faded away. Joseph lived in a time of moral and spiritual darkness. They were living under the dominion of the powerful Roman Empire. For all practical purposes Israel, as a nation, was no more.

Joseph lived in the small village of Nazareth. Nazareth often was the butt of jokes. But Joseph didn't go to Nazareth because it was a great city. He went there to work his trade. Joseph was a carpenter, a practical man rather than a poet or philosopher. He worked with things he could handle and measure, cut and saw. Wood is solid and stable. The same integrity he liked in wood, he looked for in people. Somewhere along the way, we don't know the details, Joseph met Mary. She came from a good, godly family. I'm guessing that Mary was about fifteen or sixteen year old when they met. Mary was an exceptional catch; she had a deep and abiding faith. Mary was different from Joseph in that way. She was a bit of a poet—in fact, one of them is preserved for us in Luke chapter 1. You may want to read it this afternoon.

When you find something of exceptional value, you don't delay, and I suspect that their relationship moved rather quickly. Before long Joseph and Mary were betrothed. Betrothal in the first century was sort of like our engagement, except that it was much more serious. Betrothal lasted a year, sometimes longer. During this period Joseph would have been busy preparing a home for Mary and any children they would eventually have. Dreams quickly can turn to nightmares, and your best plans can be shattered. Mary's behavior changed and Joseph became perplexed. But he was totally unprepared for what came next: "Joe, I'm pregnant." Joseph had questions—and needed answers. But when Mary did finally answer him, it was like a slap in the face.

Mary told Joseph the story that we have read so many times in the gospels. We read the story, but rarely do we stop to consider how Joseph was impacted by God's decision to do things the way that he chose to do them. Joseph was a man just like us. He would have perceived things much like we would. "Joseph, the truth is, I'm still a virgin. The Spirit of God came upon me and supernaturally planted a baby in my womb. You do believe me, don't you, Joseph?" I suspect that Joseph was furious. I would have been. It was one thing for Mary to betray their love, it was another thing to treat him like a fool by telling him a story that bordered on blasphemy. She had violated their love, their trust, and also his reputation. As soon as Mary's pregnancy became apparent people would assume that he was the father and his reputation would be destroyed.

But then he thought, "As angry as I am, I still love her. I can't expose her and her family to public ridicule and shame. I will just sever our relationship quietly and make up some kind of story and move to another town. Start over." But then an angel appeared to Joseph and said: "Don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because this child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. And you shall call his name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." Joseph was elated—I'm sure he apologized to Mary for doubting her. Immediately they married, but in keeping with the angel's instructions he kept Mary a virgin until after Jesus was born. I think he had no idea the troubles that lay ahead.

During Mary's ninth month of pregnancy, the Roman emperor wanted a census taken for the purpose of taxation. That meant that all the males in the country had to go back to the place of their births. Joseph and Mary had to make the trip from Nazareth back to his hometown of Bethlehem. Imagine being eight, nine months pregnant and taking a three day donkey ride? On top of that was the enormity of the crowd that descended upon Bethlehem because of the census. When they arrived his relatives had already taken in more people than they could handle. They laid little Jesus in a feeding trough because the only other place to put him would have been on the filth of the cattle floor. Soon some smelly shepherds showed up saying that they had heard an angelic choir out on the hillside.

About a year later some strange visitors arrived in Bethlehem. They were astrologers from Persia; they'd seen a strange star, and followed it to Jerusalem. After the wise men left, God warned Joseph to take Mary and Jesus into Egypt, because Herod would try to kill Jesus—a rival king. Joseph and his family remained in Egypt for a couple of years until Herod died, and then they made their way back home.

As a child, when Jesus skinned his knee, it bled. Joseph held him on his lap and told bedtime stories. He taught him how to read and write and how to do basic arithmetic. Jesus was bright, no doubt about it. But he still had to learn. He wasn't that different. Not "Savior of the world" different. As Jesus grew up, I wonder if Joseph ever doubted if he'd dreamed the whole thing up. With whom do you discuss doubts like this? He couldn't talk to the people in the village. They, of course, had a much more earthy explanation for Jesus' birth. In fact, he never lived it down. Joseph would have found comfort in one Old Testament passage. Eight hundred years before Joseph was born Isaiah said that a virgin would conceive and have a son and would call his name Emmanuel, which means, "God with us."

Some of us believe our doubts, and we doubt our beliefs. Sometimes we wonder if we really believe at all. I think Joseph had his doubts from time to time; how could he not? But he faced those doubts and came down on the side of faith. Joseph chose to trust, in spite of his questions and hurts. He chose to walk by faith and not by sight. Biblical faith does not require that every question be answered before it commits itself. Joseph was a man of faith. The presence of doubt does not nullify the power of faith. And that is why God used Him. If you entertain doubts, remember that God honors faith (Hebrews 11:6). Although Joseph had his doubts—he demonstrated great faith in the midst of those doubts, and I believe that God was pleased.



Triangle Community Church
and the
**Institute for
Biblical Counseling
and Discipleship**



present

2026 Regional Care and Discipleship Training

Whether you're a new believer in Christ or well-seasoned in ministry, this training will help equip you for fruitful discipleship in your church and community. Join us!

Who will benefit?

- ✓ Every church member who wants to grow as a disciple
- ✓ Small group leaders, elders or deacons entrusted with the care of the church family
- ✓ Any Christian who wants to sharpen their skills in caring for others
- ✓ Those seeking Phase 1 training for the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (ACBC)

Topics Include:

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|
| ✓ How People Change | ✓ God's Design for Marriage | ✓ Anxiety |
| ✓ Peacemaking Principles | ✓ Marriage Conflicts | ✓ Temptation |
| ✓ Anger and Abuse | ✓ Divorce and Remarriage | ✓ Mental Illness |
| ✓ Depression | ✓ Parenting | ✓ and more! |

What is the format?

- Videos, group discussion, and live counseling observation
- Four Saturdays together as a cohort, plus three hours per month of individual online content
- Monthly lunches included
- Only \$99 for the whole training package

When and where will it meet?

Triangle Community Church (4216 Kildaire Farm Road, Apex 27539)

8³⁰am to 4⁰⁰pm on Saturday **January 17, February 21, March 21** and **April 18, 2026**

Questions?

Just e-mail Pastor Dan Clement at:
BiblicalHopeAndHelp@gmail.com

**FAQ, Complete Info,
and Registration here:**



Digging Deeper in your Daily Quiet Time

Joseph received angelic messages in a dream (Matthew 1:20; 2:13 & 19). But we...

We must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? (Hebrews 2:1–3)

So, exactly how can we "pay much closer attention" to the Word of God, the Bible? Let's see...

Monday—Pray for understanding and read the passage repeatedly.

- Psalm 119:18
- James 1:5
- Note repeated words, observe the tone and flow of the argument.
- Observe who, what, when, where, why and how.
- Make lists.

Tuesday—Identify the genre of literature and the literary context.

- Is this narrative (historical record), poetry, prophecy, epistle or wisdom literature?
- Where does the passage you are studying fit into the flow of the book? Of the entire Bible?
- How does this passage connect to important themes elsewhere in Scripture?

Wednesday—Examine the historical and cultural background.

- Who wrote this book, and to whom was it written?
- What was happening culturally, politically, and religiously?
- What idioms or customs require further study in a Bible dictionary?

Thursday—Make observations about the text itself. Then make even more! Pay attention to:

- Key words
- Grammatical/structural markers (therefore, but, so that, in order to, etc.)
- Commands, promises, warnings
- Cause and effect relationships
- Comparison and contrast
- Questions asked or answered

Friday—Decide what the passage meant to the original audience.

- What was the author saying? How would the original audience have understood it?
- What problems are being addressed?
- What theological truths are being taught?
- Allow clearer passages to regulate more difficult passages.
- Avoid imposing modern assumptions and personal experience onto the text!

Saturday—Apply God's truth to your own life.

- What truth does it reveal about God's character? ...about man's?
- What sin are we to avoid?
- What commands are we to obey?
- What promises are we to trust?
- How does this passage shape our worship, our hope, our attitudes, our relationships?